

U. S. NAVAL FORCES OPERATING IN EUROPEAN WATERS
MINE FORCE, U. S. ATLANTIC FLEET,

U. S. S. BLACK HAWK, *Flagship*.

JS/WPB.

Kirkwall, Orkney Islands,
22 July 1919.

My dear Doctor:

I have your letter of March fourteenth before me and it is a reproach I assure you reminding me that I have never answered it and thanked you for the information it contained. I find your advice was good, for all of the securities show an advance.

I have been up in Kirkwall for about three months. It is a most desolate place, not even tempting one to take a walk on shore. I made one visit to London recently, stopping for a day at Inverness. The latter place is much the same as usual and I met several friends on the streets and their greetings were cordial enough to make it pleasant.

It is a slow and dangerous process to pick up what is left of the fifty-six thousand mines that we planted last year. We find that about forty to forty-three percent are still moored in the places where they were planted. You can readily calculate what a vast number of these things are yet to be picked up in an area of some six thousand square miles. We are very careful but nevertheless have had one vessel sunk with the loss of several lives including Commander King, and on another occasion the Commanding Officer of one of the Sweepers was killed. Doctor Wellington is the head medical man of the Force and, despite his inferior rank, is a most excellent one. We have about four thousand men and seventy-five vessels engaged in the business.

I did not write a letter of commendation as there have been so many sent to the Department that they have lost their value. I was told in the Bureau of Navigation that they get several recommendations every day. I think I did better for you, however, than that; I appended a statement to your fitness report which I think will satisfy you and I also recommended, in view of your good service, that you be given the Navy Cross, stating of course my reasons for the recommendation.

I congratulate you on having so nice and independent a job as command of the hospital at New London.

I fancy it is much more peaceful than duty in Washington and from my point of view, therefore, preferable.

Very sincerely yours,

Joe Strauss